



Meeting Minutes Duval County Public Schools

February 26, 2024, Duval County School Board/City Council Joint Meeting

Mr. Darryl Willie, Chairman
Ms. Charlotte D. Joyce, Vice-Chairman
Ms. April A. Carney
Dr. Kelly Coker
Ms. Lori Hershey
Mr. Warren A. Jones
Ms. Cindy Pearson
Dr. Dana Kriznar, Superintendent

ATTENDANCE AT THIS MEETING OF THE DUVAL COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD: All Board Members were present except Board Member Hershey. Dr. Dana Kriznar, Superintendent, was also present. Mr. Ray Poole, Office of General Counsel, was not present. CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Ron Salem (President), Ken Amaro (arr. 10:43), Raul Arias, Michael Boylan, Joe Carlucci, Tyrone Clark-Murray, Rory Diamond, Terrance Freeman, Reggie Gaffney Jr., Mike Gay, Nick Howland, Rahman Johnson (arr. 10:48), Will Lahnen, Chris Miller, Jimmy Peluso (arr. 11:05), and Randy White. CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS EXCUSED: Kevin Carrico, Matt Carlucci.

Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

Council President Salem convened the meeting and thanked School Board Chair Darryl Willie and Superintendent Dana Kriznar for their cooperation in helping to make arrangements for this meeting. The attendees introduced themselves for the record.

Items to be Discussed

1. ISSUES THAT WILL IMPACT GROWTH, FUNDING, QUALITY OF LIFE, AND WORK WITHIN THE CITY OF JACKSONVILLE

Presentation of Resolution

Council Member (CM) Boylan presented City Council Resolution 2024-84-A honoring and commending Mandarin High School to representatives of the high school in attendance. Sara Bravo, Mandarin High School Principal, introduced representatives of the school's athletic department and administration.

Presentation by Joint Planning Committee

T.R. Hainline, Chair of the Joint Planning Committee, gave a brief history of the Joint Planning Committee and its mission to plan for the future development of capital facilities. He noted that the appointment terms of all the members have expired for several years, although they continue to meet at least twice a year as

required by law. The board has not been very active and would appreciate being given a specific charge and productive work to do, or alternatively, the committee could be sunset by ordinance.

Safety: School Zones, Crosswalks, Sidewalks and Crossing Guards

Chris LeDew, Chief of Traffic Engineering, discussed the difference between school crossings (signage at existing controlled intersections) and school zones (more elaborate signage, flashing lights, pavement markings, etc.). School zones are only installed for elementary schools, not middle or high schools. Charter schools are treated the same as public schools as far as safety, but private schools are responsible for their own safety features. The City has had a School Safety Committee for more than 30 years with representation from Traffic Engineering, the school district, Sheriff's Office, Public Works Department, and Florida Department of Transportation. School zones are required to have crossing guards hired by the Sheriff's Office, and those crossing guards are the "eyes and ears" for the Traffic Engineering Division with regard to conditions impacting school areas. Common school-related requests/problems brought to Traffic Engineering's attention include requests for installation of a full-blown school zone, remediation of traffic queuing on roads and in neighborhoods waiting for afternoon pickup lines, and complaints about parents dropping children off in non-school areas (i.e. business parking lots) and having them walk the final block or two to school to avoid going through the drop-off line. Future issues include a new state law that allows video camera enforcement of speed limits in school zones and vehicles passing buses loading or unloading children, and new schools seem to be being built with appropriate queuing space for drop-off/pickup lines.

School Board Member Cindy Pearson inquired about the rules that apply when there are students with various ages because a K-12 charter school in her district has been requesting a school crossing zone and another location has a K-8 school across the street from a middle/high school. Mr. LeDew asked for the specific sites, and he'll take it up with the School Safety Committee.

CM Pittman asked about a location that has a pedestrian overpass over the road that isn't being used and the possibility of getting a street-level crossing zone because that's where students are actually crossing.

CM Arias asked about JSO enforcement in school zones, Ellis Burns, Chief of Special Events, said they work them actively during the first month of the school year with 55 officers, often on a complaint basis. Mr. Arias said he's heard from several companies that provide school zone enforcement cameras and wondered if they are a viable option. Chief Ellis said he's not sure that speed control cameras are needed, citing the example of the red-light cameras that were tried in the city and later discontinued. He thinks the bus-mounted cameras might be more impactful.

School Board Vice-Chair Charlotte Joyce said all school districts have safety issues related to crossings and traffic. She asked about the School Safety Committee, the membership and the meeting schedule. Mr. LeDew said they meet monthly via the Teams app. Ms. Joyce asked that the School Board Members get invitations to those meetings so they can listen in to the proceedings. CM Boylan asked what Traffic Engineering will do regarding schools that don't have sufficient queuing space for vehicles, particularly as new schools are built, or existing schools are repurposed. Mr. LeDew said they can do traffic studies to look at stacking problems.

School Board Member April Carney said several middle school students have been hit while crossing roads indicating a need to do something more to protect that age group. Mr. LeDew said the division does traffic studies when asked. The incidents at Mayport Middle School and Fletcher Middle and High School were on state roads, not City roads.

School Board Member Warren Jones asked about a shortage of school crossing guards and how schools are prioritized for their services. Chief Burns said he has 248 active crossing guards and another 63

vacancies. They have raised the pay rate from \$15 to \$18 an hour to attract more applicants. They prioritize crossing guard assignments based on the busiest streets and try to hire from adjacent neighborhoods so the guards can walk to the crossings.

JaxParks Aquatics: Pool Usage, Maintenance, Opening & Staffing

Daryl Joseph, Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services, made a presentation on school pools. He thanked the school district for their continuing cooperation on joint use agreements on recreational facilities, including pools. There are 69 joint use agreements on sites owned by the school district and 27 on City-owned sites that cover playgrounds, playing fields and pools. There are 17 school pool locations, with 3 currently under renovation. Two new pools are being designed for Atlantic Coast and First Coast high schools. Aquatic programming includes school and community swim team seasons, lifeguard training, and private swim clubs. The City is doing more to recruit lifeguards, including raising the pay rate and offering more training opportunities.

CM Diamond asked for information that could be shared by council members via social media to help with recruitment.

School Board Chair Darryl Willie thanked Mr. Joseph for being responsive when problems arise with the pools and parks and for being proactive with increasing swimming lessons availability.

CM Amaro asked about pool readiness for the upcoming summer after last year's problems. Mr. Joseph said they are recruiting much harder this year for lifeguards at a wide variety of venues and doing training in more locations to meet applicants where they are.

CM Johnson praised the department's work with community organizations and the Delifus Foundation on lifeguard recruitment.

CM Freeman asked about additional opportunities for new facilities to attract bigger sporting events to the city. Mr. Joseph said their emphasis to date has been on renovating and upgrading existing facilities before trying to attract large outside events.

Reading Initiatives: Working Collaboratively on River City Readers

Paula Renfro, Chief Academic Officer, Duval County Public Schools, said early literacy is vitally important in getting children ready for success. She thanked Ameris Bank for its support of an enhanced app targeted at eight Read Jax schools that makes reading fun and rewarding. Schools are embracing the Beanstack community reading promotion program and incorporating the challenges into their curriculum.

Melissa Ross of the Mayor's Office said literacy is a top priority of Mayor Deegan. There were over 3,000 attendees at the River City Readers kickoff event and more events have been held in neighborhoods. The program is already more than halfway to the 300,000-minute reading target and the goal may be raised because of that. They are looking at more reward opportunities for both children and teachers.

Dr. Saralyn Grass of the Kids Hope Alliance said PNC Bank and Lucy Gooding Foundation are also funding reading initiatives. KHA has a great relationship with the school system in many areas, including reading promotion. The City funded 780 additional after-school program slots and more security at 20 program sites. An intensive summer literacy initiative is being planned with UNF and will be expanded to run throughout the year instead of just during the summer. Everything the KHA does in conjunction with DCPS has a literacy aspect and data shows that students who participate in any of the programs do better academically than those who don't, and the more they participate, the better they do academically.

President Salem said the Jacksonville Journey had a noticeable impact on community violence reduction some years ago and asked if that is going to be monitored as these new literacy efforts are implemented. Melissa Ross said it definitely will.

CM Lahnen asked about potential expansion of the reading enhancement app beyond the initial 8 schools; Dr. Grass said it will eventually.

School Board Chair Darryl Willie said the fact that the school district's graduation rate is increasing post-COVID shows that students are resilient and that forebodes well for the future. Good attendance is crucially important for literacy, test scores and graduation rates.

Melissa Ross said the Mayor's Office is interested in doing anything it can to promote attendance and better academic performance.

CM Freeman said lots of small non-profits have complained that they don't get a fair chance to compete for city contracts because they don't have the size or budget to match what larger, established providers can do. Dr. Grass said KHA is trying to work with those smaller organizations so everyone can be part of the solution.

Joint Use Agreements & Hurricane Shelters

Fire Chief Keith Powers thanked the school district for being a great partner in using schools as emergency shelters. The City and school district are currently in the second 5-year contract for shelter use and coming up on the next contract renewal. The contract pays \$500,000 a year for costs related to conversions and cleaning of schools used as evacuation shelters. There are 30 shelters available, including several for special needs populations and two are pet friendly. They don't take the closure decision lightly because it heavily impacts the schools.

Erika Harding, Assistant Superintendent for Operations for DCPS, said the most recent addition to the shelter list is Rutledge Pearson Elementary which opened in the fall of 2023. The district has ensured that all schools have an architect's certified letter and site plan for their suitability for use as a shelter. Four more schools will be added as they are completed – Englewood Elementary, Spring Park Elementary, Sheffield Elementary, and Pickett Elementary. Consistency of messaging to the public is very important, so good, timely, and open communication between the City and the school district is needed. She reiterated that the closure of schools for shelter purposes imposes a tremendous burden on the students, faculty and learning process at those schools. DCPS will be meeting with Emergency Preparedness to work on minimizing those closure impacts.

President Salem asked about the \$500,000 per year contract amount. Chief Powers said it is in his department's budget in a storm response account and used as needed, then the city seeks reimbursement from FEMA.

CM Peluso asked when a temporary shelter becomes long-term, how they are equipped, and what are the roles of the American Red Cross and the Emergency Preparedness Division. Andre Ayoub, Chief of Emergency Preparedness in the Fire and Rescue Department, said communication among all parties is crucial. The Red Cross is at the table along with the school district and Emergency Preparedness when decisions are made. The Red Cross is involved from day one, but their importance ramps up as an event lasts longer. JSO and school personnel are in charge at the site, and their input goes up the chain of command to Emergency Preparedness through a single point of contact for decision making.

CM Diamond asked about a policy regarding housing illegal aliens in a hurricane situation. Chief Ayoub said they don't check identification for place of residence or citizenship at emergency shelters. They look at population growth and shelter capacity needs each year to ensure they have enough capacity.

Mr. Diamond asked if the federal government informs Jacksonville about how many illegal aliens are being transported to the city; Mr. Ayoub said it does not.

School Board Member Cindy Pearson said it costs \$3 million extra to build a school to hurricane shelter requirements and that comes from the district's budget. She wants the city to look at other possible public buildings that are not schools to handle the first wave of evacuees. She said 130,000 students missed 3 days of school last year to accommodate 234 evacuees for Hurricane Idalia, which places a tremendous burden on the school district, teachers, student learning, and families.

Chief Ayoub said he would prefer not to shut down schools and would try to use the Legends Community Center as the first evacuation site if possible. There is a statewide shelter plan done every 2 years that sets out criteria for what kinds of buildings can be used as a shelter and that impacts their decision. Public schools are required to be built to hurricane shelter standards by state law so that is the state's primary expectation for shelters. He said he is open to looking at other options.

CM Johnson said the goal should be to not turn away anyone in need from a shelter in an emergency. He said transportation has been a problem in the past, getting people from the school shelters to the longer-term shelter at the Legends Center and asked about the relationship with JTA. Chief Ayoub said JTA is represented in the Emergency Operations Center and participates in those decisions.

Superintendent Search Update

School Board Chair Darryl Willie said picking a new leader for the district is a huge responsibility for the Board. They've re-started the paused process by hiring the Florida School Board Association to do a national search for a superintendent. So far virtual meetings, focus groups and numerous surveys about what the community wants in a superintendent have been done. He said that the district should be seen as a very attractive opportunity for candidates because of its increasing graduation rates and the half-cent sales tax to build and renovate facilities. The position will be advertised from March 15th to April 15th, the board will identify its semi-finalists on April 23rd, select its finalists on May 7th, hold on-site interviews May 13-14, and hold a special board meeting to choose the new superintendent on May 23rd. A contract will be approved on June 4th for a projected start date of July 1st for the new superintendent. The board feels the timing is right to get a good candidate this time around.

President Salem noted that this is the third of four joint City Council/School Board meetings he has planned during his year as president, and he will be scheduling one more joint meeting in May or June.

CM Johnson thanked Dr. Dana Kriznar for her outstanding work as the interim superintendent.

CM Peluso said he will be holding a noticed meeting tomorrow afternoon at 4 p.m. to discuss a resolution he is drafting regarding the City's history of real estate redlining and housing discrimination.

Public Comment

The following spoke during public comment:

- John Nooney

Adjournment

1. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:54 a.m.

GC

Superintendent

Chairman